

**apas** is looking for lots of new volunteers.

We need advice workers - dealing with telephone callers, emails and personal callers, people to help with fundraising, people to help us produce our newsletter and with administration generally and people who are interested in helping to spread the word about how to tackle the growing drink problem - people who will talk to anyone about 'what works.'

Full training and support is guaranteed. The training often helps people to get paid work, either here or elsewhere.

Our volunteers provide a crucial role within our organisation and we are lucky enough to have plenty of support from this sector. Many of our volunteers have gone on to gain employment either full time at **apas** or in other substance misuse agencies due to the valuable experience they gain as an **apas** volunteer.

Most of our volunteer opportunities are in client services as Telephone Advice Workers, but we are also lucky enough to have individuals who help us out with administrative support. We welcome applications from all walks of life and believe that everyone has something unique that they can contribute to our service, so no matter where your skills and experience lie if you are interested in becoming an **apas** volunteer **Contact us** for more information.

You can call us to discuss what's available, or simply contact us to get an information pack.

## **Telephone Advice Workers**

**The Telephone Advice Worker (TAWs)** once selected our volunteers receive our full training programme covering a range of issues including alcohol use and misuse, alcohol awareness and education, treatment philosophies, local services and drug awareness and education. Our workers will also receive training on making and taking calls and emails and will also learn a range of skills to help them to respond to difficult calls that may involve other sensitive issues such as Child Protection, domestic violence or self harm and suicide.

Our workers are given a full tool kit to help them to understand the impact of alcohol upon the individual, the family, the community and on society as a whole. They will be provided with the skills necessary to offer help and support to vulnerable clients and will be given the opportunity to develop their roles and take on more responsibility such as one-2-one client work, community awareness and training events and regular correspondence with ongoing clients.

As part of our volunteer package we offer ongoing training and development, opportunities to attend external training programmes and monthly one-2-one supervision sessions. Volunteers are encouraged to become a part of the team through joining staff socials and staff training events, becoming apas members, attending board meetings and contributing to **apas** times. Our volunteers contribute to every aspect of our service and their contributions are recognised and rewarded.

## **apas** expects...

**apas** expects a lot of its Telephone Advice Workers. TAWs are our front door, they are our best advert, they bring in 99% of our business. They need a varied package of skills and they need to exhibit flexibility and judgments in the use of their knowledge.

We hope that you will get hooked - not on alcohol itself (!) but on the whole subject area. We are keen to encourage you to widen your knowledge and develop in any specialist area you might choose. We have a resource library which you are welcome to use. Individual members of staff are available to have their brains picked. We will be impressed by those of you who exploit the opportunities that are available. Full-time staff are very busy, so it is up to you to grab them and ask for their time.

We welcome too your ideas. We may not agree with all of them, but when you have been working here for a few months you may have some valuable suggestions about how to improve working practices or to generate more income so that we can provide more, different or better services.

We ask for a commitment of 4 hours per week of your time for one year. In exchange we give you a minimum of 60 hours' training, regular supervision, administrative support and indemnity in the region of £2 million. At the end of your time with us we will be happy to supply a report on your work with **apas** and / or a full reference.

If you wish to continue to offer us your time on the telephone rota after your year is ended, we shall be very happy to have you stay on. Please speak to the apas direct / alcoline Lead about any variations in arrangements.

In the unlikely event of any TAWs work being deemed unsatisfactory, this will be dealt with in an open and assertive manner by your supervisor. Our first commitment has, of course, to be to the clients of our service. TAWs will be given every opportunity to access the help and support they need to attain and maintain the required standard.

Should you be unhappy about any of our working practices, we expect you to tell us directly through the line management system, so that we can discuss issues and iron out any misunderstandings. We need to model the principles of honest communication, responsibility and respect to our clients by relating to each other in an open, responsible and respectful way.

### **My experience of working as a Telephone Advice Worker**

When I applied for a voluntary position as Telephone Advice Worker at Apas last May I was full of excitement and expectations. I found out about the opportunity of working for Apas through the Active Communities team at Nottingham University, an academic service whose main endeavour consists in trying to get academic staff and students to offer their skills to the community through voluntary work. I have been a PhD student in Cultural Studies at Nottingham University for the last three years and my research has focussed mostly on psychoanalytic theory, particularly on what an (unfortunately) rather obscure French school of psychoanalysis calls “contemporary symptoms:” addiction, depression, anxiety, eating disorders and other forms of psychic suffering that are leaving a deep mark on the culture of our times. This is why I got very excited when I learned about the possibility of working on a telephone helpline for people with alcohol problems. I ran to Park Row to submit my application thinking: “This is for me!” “This is what will finally help me to get out of my narrow theoretical bubble and see what is really going on!”

Now, almost seven months later, I can say that my excitement and my expectations have not been frustrated or disappointed in any way. At Apas not only have I managed to find what I was looking for: I found even more than I

expected. Talking to clients on the phone has been a constant challenge to my assumptions and ideas on substance misuse. It made me realize how each person can experience their distress in a totally unique way and how this uniqueness, in turn, transforms the communication between client and worker into an experience that is always new, always exceptional, and always demanding new solutions and new approaches. Working at Apas has also helped me to become aware of the variety of services available in the community and made me catch a glimpse of the complexity of social policies and strategies in their concrete consequences and impact on people's lives. Last, but not least, Apas has provided me with an incredibly supportive working environment and I have found in all the workers a constant source of inspiration, advice and help.

Recently, I have left my voluntary position and I have started to work for Apas as a paid worker. I come to Apas two days per week and I continue to work on my research project during the rest of the week. This has become an ideal "compromise" between work and study since more and more Apas is reinforcing my interest for my research topic, while my research, on the other hand, motivates my interest for what I am learning to do at Apas. My learning curve has even increased since I started to see clients face to face and it is, indeed, a very good feeling to be given the chance and the freedom to learn something that is not only valuable and rewarding as such, but also deeply challenging and relevant to other aspects of my life and of my personal development.

**Luca Bosetti**